



View of the Delaware River at Upper Black Eddy looking downstream. Photo by Robert L. Limbeck.

In order to protect portions of the lower Delaware River and designated tributaries which recently were added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by Congress, the commission is engaged in a comprehensive monitoring program to define existing water quality in the area and develop protective water quality criteria.

The monitoring data may provide the basis for designation of this portion of the river as “special protection waters” in accordance with a petition submitted to the commission in 2001 by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.

The sampling program is being coordinated with the state environmental agencies in Pennsylvania and New Jersey along with the National Park Service, the Delaware River Greenway Partnership, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Beginning in the year 2000, staff began assembling baseline data on oxygen levels, pH, specific conductance, temperature, turbidity, hardness, alkalinity, chlorides, bacteria, suspended and dissolved solids, and nutrients.

In 2001, a biological component was added to the program. Benthic macroinvertebrates (bottom-dwelling insects, worms, mussels, and crustaceans) were sampled at 25 locations along 200 miles of the river as part of a three-year survey to build a habitat-based benthic index of the waterway’s biological integrity. It will measure such ecological properties as richness, diversity, balance, and pollution tolerance.

The Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2000 adds about 65 miles of the Delaware and selected tributaries to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, linking the Delaware Water Gap and Washington Crossing, Pa., just upstream of Trenton, N.J.

To learn more about the sections of the Delaware and its tributaries that have been included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, visit the DRBC web site at: http://www.nj.gov/drbc/wild_scenic.htm.

